



# Esprit de Corps

A Bulletin of the Washington Service Corps

Washington State  
**SERVICE CORPS**  
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

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## Veterans Take Dragons Head on

By *Brianne Liembach, Seattle University Intern, Seattle*

It is a brisk morning as veterans congregate near the fire pit before the challenge begins, unaware of what is about to come. It will be a day of learning and adapting to new challenges presented; a day to learn about communication, trust, personal accountability, and leadership; a day to learn about yourself and other veterans as a community. The event took place at the Waterhouse Center in Monroe, WA. Amidst the trees, brush, and wildlife was a series of courses which were designed to challenge groups to work together, communicate, and lead one another to face their fears. Veterans from all branches of the military, volunteers who are personally connected to service members, and Vet Corps members participated in the challenges presented.

The River Task required all persons to cross a theoretical alligator-infested river by swinging on a rope and all land on the same 3'x3' platform on the same side. As if this

isn't a challenge in itself, they also had to carry across a full bucket of water without spilling a drop. Fourteen people are difficult to fit on a 3'x3' platform, especially when they are swinging across on a rope. Leadership was apparent as individuals took charge of the situation to ensure each person arrived safely on the opposing side. Veterans on the platform would catch others and link arms to ensure nobody fell off. The military training and team work allowed the group to successfully complete the task quickly and efficiently.

The goal of the wire challenge was to have every person successfully walk across the wire and through obstacles without falling in less than thirty minutes. This required trust and concern for every other individual at all times. The focus was impeccable and the course was completed in fifteen minutes. This was characteristic of the Vet Corps program. Through the course it was important to move yourself forward, while still helping those behind you. The Vet Corps program is a group of veterans that assist fellow veterans with their transition into civilian life. The veterans work on moving their lives forward to becoming civilians, while having concern and providing help to others just beginning their transition.

Each challenge presented was designed to teach a valuable lesson that can be carried into everyday life. The Dragon Challenge was the biggest obstacle presented. Standing on a 50-foot high platform each member was strapped into cables one by one and asked to jump off and glide to the ground on a zip line through trees and the wilderness. The fear of letting go and jumping was described before-hand by the course leader as a metaphor for a dragon, whose name is fear, that must be accepted before it can be confronted and overcome. Jaime, an AmeriCorps member, stood at the top slowly confronting her fears with encouragement from others. After ten minutes of confronting the zip line, she was finally able to accept her personal dragon and leapt from the platform.

After a long day of challenges and working together the group debriefed on lessons learned.



*Veterans Navigation team making a difference!*

# AmeriCorps Member Collaboration Results in Healthy Smiles and Friendships

*By Cathy Chen and Kaitlin Schrup,  
Individual Placement Members,  
Seattle*

Washington Service Corps Individual Placement AmeriCorps members Cathy Chen and Kaitlin Schrup work across the hall from each other at ElderHealth Northwest, a non-profit organization in Seattle that is working toward a future where adults with serious illnesses or disabilities can be supported in the community rather than living in isolation or needing to resort to institutional care. However, their projects are quite distinct.

Cathy serves as Dental Clinic coordinator in partnership with the University of Washington's Mobile Geriatric Dental Clinic to provide Medicaid-funded dental care for low-income seniors. Kaitlin serves as Match Coordinator for ElderFriends volunteer companionship program, pairing isolated elders with volunteer companions from the local community with the goal of relieving loneliness and isolation. This spring the two discovered just what they can accomplish when they work together.

ElderFriends currently has close to eighty older adults matched with friendly visiting volunteers all over King County. Elizabeth, from Renton, has been a participant with ElderFriends for over three years. She spent most of her life in Hawaii, and surfed in her free time. Elizabeth joined ElderFriends when she moved to Washington.

When ElderFriends volunteers Dianne and Jerry came to visit Elizabeth during the holidays, a friendship blossomed. For over two and half years, Dianne and Jerry have supported and formed a meaningful friendship with Elizabeth. During early spring, Dianne called ElderFriends concerned about Elizabeth's oral health, and was wondering if ElderFriends knew of any dental programs. Kaitlin referred Elizabeth to Cathy, who learned that Elizabeth had not seen a dentist in years. Cathy helped Elizabeth fill out her registration paperwork to become a patient of the Mobile Geriatric Clinic, and made sure that Elizabeth would have transportation to Seattle for all of her appointments. Dianne

brought Elizabeth to her first appointment where everyone finally got the chance to meet in person.

Elizabeth is now able to obtain all of her dental care through the University of Washington School Of Dentistry, and she has repeatedly expressed how grateful she is to finally receive these services. Elizabeth's success story is the result of the collaborative efforts of AmeriCorps members Kaitlin and Cathy, and outstanding volunteers such as Dianne, who are all part of an organization dedicated to caring for the elderly and underserved.



*Individual Placement members left and right Cathy Chen and Kaitlin Schrup with dental client showing their passion for service!*

# VISTA Leader Hosts Table at Youth and Government Event

*By Sue Kitchel, Washington Service Corps Staff, Lacey*

Washington Service Corps staff, Sue Kitchel, and three VISTA members hosted an informational table at the Annual Youth and Government Legislative event at the Capital campus on May 8<sup>th</sup>. This week long event was sponsored by the YMCA of the greater Seattle area.

Founded in 1947, the YMCA Youth and Legislature event provides students the opportunity to experience the democratic process firsthand. Throughout the year, participants learn how to research public policy issues, write real legislation, practice public speaking and debating skills, and work together to achieve a goal. Assuming the roles of Senator, Representative, lobbyist, and press, the Youth Legislature meets in a four-day legislative session presided over by their statewide elected officials, including governor, Secretary of State, Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House. Nearly 500 students participated in this year's event. Numerous colleges and local programs, such as AmeriCorps, provided information to students regarding opportunities to learn and serve.



*VISTA Leader Jennifer Burns displaying the information table and getting things done!*

# What is the Boys and Girls Club of Southwest Washington up to?

*By Brendan Stabeno, Individual Placement member, Vancouver*

As an AmeriCorps member working for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington, in Vancouver, I was selected to implement a tutoring and mentoring program for the members at the Clinton & Gloria John Clubhouse. Secondary to that task, is my goal of increasing local youth involvement in service both in the community, as well as here at the club.

In January, I was in our teen room talking to one of our older club members, a middle school student named Dylan. After brushing over the usual topics that I bring up with club members including homework and what he learned in school that day, this reserved young man came alive when he realized that we both had a passionate interest in the guitar. While our taste in music differed greatly, we both agreed that the club was in desperate need of a guitar program, and who better to run that program than us.

After that initial conversation, we began to brainstorm on what we would need to run a successful guitar program at the club. We quickly realized two things: first, we needed guitars, and second, we would need additional assistance. After presenting the idea to the Club Director,

we found out that our other club had a few guitars in storage and that one of our former club members, a high school student named Darren, was a great guitar player. After making a few phone calls, countless trips between clubs and a couple of visits to a local guitar store, Dylan and I managed to round up 11 guitars, 2 tuners, 5 guitar books and one pack of picks. After recruiting Darren, we had all that we needed to successfully run the program.

Since the program ended two weeks ago, three of the members who participated in the program have continued to play. But perhaps most significant to me, was the progression that I saw in Dylan. When I first met Dylan, he mostly kept to himself, but after ten weeks in front of his peers teaching chords and discussing strum patterns, this once shy club member had come full circle, standing confidently in front of the class on a consistent basis, leading lessons on songs including Tom Petty's "Free Fallin'." Furthermore, since finishing the program Dylan has repeatedly voiced his interest in participating in upcoming service events and recently received our Youth of the Month award for his service in leading the guitar program, the Club's most prestigious recognition.

My work with the guitar program is a microcosm of the overall AmeriCorps experience. You have an idea to improve the community, but you don't know how to implement that idea, nor do you have the necessary resources. But through hard work, vision and a lot of resourcefulness you are able to create something that is mutually beneficial for both your target demographic as well as those working alongside you. I thoroughly enjoyed watching Dylan see the fruition of our small idea and it reminded me how much I enjoy getting things done for AmeriCorps.



*Individual Placement member Brendan Stabeno improving his community one song at a time.*

## SERVES 2010 and Beyond!

### **SERVES 2010 and Beyond**

We'd like to gather more feedback from members regarding the SERVES Institute and their experience at SERVES. If you'd like to help shape future SERVES events and make sure the needs of future members are met, please e-mail Terri Jack, Training Coordinator at [tjack@esd.wa.gov](mailto:tjack@esd.wa.gov) with the answers to these questions:

- What was your favorite part of SERVES?
- What was your least favorite part?
- What do you feel would improve the SERVES experience for members?

# Saltwater State Park Earth Day 2010

*By Kristina Santwan, Washington Service Corps Staff, Lacey*

Children from several elementary schools rushed from their school buses and arrived at the Earth Day Environmental Fair at Saltwater State Park. They were full of energy and ready to learn! There were an astounding 740 attendees, 90 AmeriCorps members and 9 Washington Service Corps staff participating in the event. AmeriCorps members from King County Housing Authority and Federal Way Public Schools organized activities to the theme of "It's your world, take care of it!" This is the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Day celebration that has been hosted by AmeriCorps members in King County.

Children from the local area schools participated in interactive exhibits and booths including the salmon life cycle, watershed education, hazardous waste management and recycling education. Additionally, there were Native American flute

circle workshops and a live sea creature touch tank! The excited children touched starfish, ran in obstacle courses and got their faces painted by the AmeriCorps members.

AmeriCorps members and staff greeted guests, took kids through hiking trails, helped at the salmon hatchery booth and assisted volunteers with the flute circle tent.

The trail hikes wound through the forest understory and up a steep slope on the south side of the park. Additionally, native plants were pointed out and questions were answered on what the children saw and heard along the trail.

The salmon hatchery booth ran by volunteers was a huge hit as the children made salmon hats and received overall education about the salmon hatchery process.

This event was a huge success and the park rangers expressed many thanks to the AmeriCorps members for their great service!



*AmeriCorps member Kelsey Krumdieck running the live sea creature touch tank.*



*Children participating at an Earth Day booth learning about watershed education.*

## Yakima Parks Getting Things Done!

*By Haley Dillon, AmeriCorps Member, Yakima*

AmeriCorps members helped serve dinner to 130 people in the community. The event was the South East Community center family night in Yakima. Members organized and ran activity booths for the children who attended. Other duties included handing out goodie bags to children, giving awards for behavior and homework, washing dishes, and cleaning up after the event.

Haley Dillon states, "It was a great experience coming together as a community and meeting other community members. We came together to help the kids we work with, as well as other community members, feel important by recognizing their accomplishments. We also helped provide entertainment for one evening."

The accomplishments and good actions were showcased in a neighborhood that tends to be known for negative activities, showing the community members that good things do occur in their area. This event helped to create a sense of belonging among the people who came together.

AmeriCorps members put in time and effort preparing the activity booths and were glad to see the children enjoying them and seeing the families come together to enjoy a meal. Members were glad to be able to recognize the students as well.

# Catalyst Park

*By Cameron Dempster, Individual Placement member, Shelton*

The Mason County WSU Master Gardeners have maintained a Food Bank Garden at Mason County Fairgrounds since 2004. Four Americorps members, as well as volunteers from the food bank and general community have helped to harvest about 3,000 lbs of fresh produce annually for donation to the Saint's Pantry Food Bank downtown. With the closing of the Fairgrounds, the Master Gardeners were forced to find a new home for the Food Bank Garden.

In January, members of Shelton's Rotary, Kiwanis, and Optimists clubs met with some of the Mason County Master Gardeners to discuss the creation of a new Community Garden in Shelton. The site designated for the garden is bordered by Harvard and Grant avenues and Eighth and Ninth streets. Two Master Gardeners donated the land to the City of Shelton in 2008 with the agreement that it would be put to use as a park or community garden. They stipulated

that the site be named Catalyst Park. The new park will have two sections. One will be a demonstration garden overseen by the Master Gardeners growing food exclusively for the Saint's Pantry Food Bank. The other will be a community garden where interested clubs or families may adopt -a-bed to tend and harvest food for themselves or the community.

Since January, Americorps members Cameron Dempster (with Mason County WSU Extension) and Chris Anderson (with Mason County Conservation District) have been working to make the park a reality. A work party was held in April to clear the site of invasive weeds, and over 20 volunteers helped out over the two days. A donated tractor from the local Toziers hardware store made quick work of the overgrown brush.

With the site cleared, a local neighbor donated some time on an excavator to level the site to make it plantable. The City of Shelton has removed a few trees, and hooked up a water meter to the site. An at-cost soil donation is being arranged from a

local landscaping company, and soon the park will become a reality!

Less than a mile from Bordeaux Elementary, the Catalyst Gardens project brings in kids from the community to learn about gardening and nutrition. Last year 66 percent of Bordeaux students were on free/reduced lunches, and this year that number is up to 71 percent. Clearly there is a huge need in this community for free, nutritious food, and now there's a great place to learn how to grow it!

Once work began at Catalyst Park, other groups have formed to create more community gardens around Mason County. Mason General Hospital had a work party to raise 16 beds for residents to adopt. The new park has been a 'Catalyst' for growth!



# Federal Way Public Schools Day of Action

*By Jackie Jamison, Federal Way Public Schools Project Supervisor, Federal Way*

On Friday, April 9, 2010, the Federal Way Public Schools AmeriCorps team partnered with Habitat for Humanity in order to celebrate the annual Community Day of Action. This year AmeriCorps members and volunteers removed garbage from the parks and the streets in the community; weeded, cut grass, planted flowers, and painted houses. After the service project was completed, community members celebrated the Westway project with cake and punch. The celebration was

held at the playground that was built last year through another AmeriCorps/Habitat for Humanity community effort. Students were able to dip their hands in paint and transfer their handprints to flower planters in the park.

Jimmy Box, who was the Westway Homeowners Association President, died at the end of 2009. Jimmy was an integral part of the Westway community and is the main reason that the community has seen so much positive success over the years. Because Jimmy was so well known in Westway, a memorial was held at the end of

the day. Jimmy's friends and family were invited to the celebration and spoke to the community about his unwavering support and dedication to service and to the Westway community. To end the day, students and community members hung up two plaques in the park. One plaque was to honor the service of Jimmy Box and the second plaque was to honor the children who live in the community.



# Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Celebrates Earth Day

*By Abby Kuranz, Individual Placement Member, Everett*

The entire month of April has been very busy at the Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force with almost an entire week dedicated to Earth Day. The week started off with a large 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Earth Day Celebration and Tree Planting event in Carnation on April 17, 2010. We partnered with 10 local community partners to provide fun, educational activities on issues such as climate change, conservation, and water quality.

Volunteers discovered new ways to help make our environment a cleaner and healthier place for generations to come and had the chance to win great give-aways from all of our partners in the process. We estimated a little over one-half of the volunteers carpooled to the event, and we gave away 22 raffle prizes to those who did! Volunteers also helped restore a section of the Snoqualmie River and at the end of the day, we had over 165 people show up to plant around 1,700 trees, totaling over 660 hours of work!

After our planting event, the task force hosted an Eco-Friendly Earth Day BBQ, where about 50 people enjoyed local and organic foods. It was a great way for the task force staff to get to know our new volunteers and catch-up with some of the veterans. Through carpooling and composting the task force reduced its own ecological footprint by a significant amount! We continued the week with two fieldtrips on April 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> in Arlington. Eighty-eight students from Elger Bay Elementary planted over 250 trees to help restore a section of Eagle Creek at a city-owned site that will soon be a community park. The task force ended the week with another Earth Day Expo in Marysville. The task force partnered with 10 other community partners to again provide educational activities and restore a section of Allen Creek at an already well established community park. Over 130 volunteers came out to help plant trees, remove invasive weeds and lay down mulch.

## Worksource and Life After AmeriCorps

*By Robert Brader, Washington Service Corps Staff, Lacey*

The most difficult part of any job search may be taking the first step. If you are uncertain about your next step, Washington Service Corps recommends that you step into your local WorkSource office. WorkSource is a joint venture of organizations dedicated to addressing Washington State's employment needs. Your local WorkSource office can assist you with all phases of your job search. WorkSource will introduce you to an array of employment and training services and get you connected with staff who are experts in the local labor market. While in WorkSource, you will also be introduced to Go2WorkSource.com, your premier online resource for finding work in Washington State.

Services for Job Seekers include:

- Free use of computers, copiers, phones, faxes and other career resources
- Internet access to jobs
- Job referral and placement
- Workshops on how to get and keep a job
- Information on the fastest growing jobs and wages
- Referral to training and other community services
- Learn strategies for finding a job translation services
- Assess your skills and get career guidance
- Get help preparing your résumé and getting ready for job interviews

To find the location of the WorkSource office nearest you, go to:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/worksource/StaticContent.aspx?Context=WSDirectorySeeker>

# Life after AmeriCorps—What's Next?

*By Kristina Santwan, Washington Service Corps Staff, Lacey*

Do you have plans for your life after AmeriCorps? Before you know it, your service term will be complete and you may realize you have not planned accordingly. Consider the questions shown below for the short-term and long-term plans to begin your new journey. The tutorial located at <http://encorps.nationalservicecorps.org/whatsnext/index.shtml> will assist you with your transition and discuss options using your education award. Good luck and thank you for your dedication to making a difference!

## **Short-term plans**

- Will you leave the community you are serving?
- When and where will you go?
- What will you do while you make longer-term decisions?
- How will you manage your finances and focus your energy?
- Who will help you?

## **Long-term plans**

- What are your career goals?
- Will you seek additional training?
- Where do you want to live?

# Important Announcements: Performance Evaluations, Exit paperwork, and Timesheets!

*By Kristina Santwan, Washington Service Corps Staff, Lacey*

Final member performance evaluations are due two weeks prior to a member's end date so please work with your site supervisor to make sure those are submitted. Additionally, please make sure that timesheets are turned in by the due date so Washington Service Corps can exit members within the required timeframe.

AmeriCorps State member exit paperwork is due to Washington Service Corps Program Coordinators within **5** business days after the member's term date.

**Please note required forms that need to be submitted on the member's scheduled term date:**

1. CNCS Exit Form
2. Member Reflection
3. Life After AmeriCorps Survey
4. Alums Registration Form (Optional)

Here is the link on the website for the required forms:

<http://www.esd.wa.gov/washingtonservicecorps/partnersandmembers/americorps-exit-forms.php>

## Upcoming Important Dates and Events

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Pre-Service Orientation for VISTA members  
August 23-26

New Program Year Begins  
September 1

National Day of Service & Remembrance  
September 11

AmeriCorps Launch  
October 22

Make a Difference Day  
October 23



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